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Committees:  
Judiciary (*Chair*)  
Higher Education  
Capital Budget



# 2004

## A REPORT TO THE 26<sup>th</sup> District

Dear Neighbors,

The New Year means a fresh beginning for the Legislature, as we reconvene to carry on the state's business in the 2004 Legislative Session.

I spent my time away from Olympia preparing for the '04 session by meeting regularly with local officials, community leaders, doctors, law enforcement officers, domestic violence advocates, and neighbors and friends who just wanted to talk. I am devoted to making sure that the interests of our community are represented in Olympia.

I was honored to be a part of the Taskforce on Officer Involved Domestic Violence to develop House Bill 2392 – the legislation that will prevent abuse by law enforcement.

I worked with House democrats as well as the Governor and Insurance Commissioner to develop a comprehensive plan to deal with the cost of insurance for doctors and patient safety. I also negotiated a way for our community to regain the native trees, shrubs, and vegetation we have lost with the destruction of the buffer along Highway 16. The revised plan will restore much of what has come to symbolize our home.

I will continue to work on local issues that are important to our community, as well as statewide projects that affect all of us in Washington State. As your representative, I am your advocate here in the Legislature and welcome your input in order to make the best decisions I can.

This is a short session – sixty days is all we have for the state's business, and there are several challenges ahead. More than anything we need to focus on improving the economy by creating good jobs, investing in education and increasing the affordability and accessibility to quality health care.

As always, please contact me with your comments about any issues that concern you and thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

Rep. Pat Lantz

**Legislative Hotline: 1 - 800- 562- 6000**

**Hearing Impaired: 1 - 800- 635- 9993**

### **WHAT'S INSIDE:**

- **Liability Insurance Reform**
- **Health Care**
- **Education**
- **Update on the Burly-Olalla Interchange**

# Patricia Lantz • Serving the 26th District

## Real Answers for Patients and Doctors – Liability Insurance Reform

To fix the economy, part of the solution must be controlling the skyrocketing costs of health care. A vital part of that is making sure patients are safe, and doctors can afford to offer their services throughout the state. A one-size-fits-all solution doesn't work here - it will take a concerted effort from all parties involved to control costs and provide protection to patients.

I am working with my colleagues in

the House to solve the puzzle of lowering medical malpractice insurance premiums while protecting patient safety. Simply capping jury awards will not solve the problem of skyrocketing insurance premiums for our doctors. We need solutions that address all of the reasons why these rates are increasing. That is why I support a package of reforms that will give patients and doctors both short- and long-term solutions to the crisis in liability insurance.

The proposal would achieve three things: Increase patient safety; assure that physicians and hospitals can get the insurance they need while stabilizing their insurance rates; and improve our civil justice system while protecting the constitutional rights of patients.

For more information on the details of the House Democrat's Med Mal Plan, visit: <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/issues/health/medmalbrief.asp>

## Improving Health Care Accessibility

The cost of health care in our country is at alarming levels, forcing many to choose between food or heat or the prescriptions and care we need. For others, it isn't even a matter of choice – health care is just not an option, and that is a terrible thing.

Part of our economic recovery will rely on the availability and affordability of health care. It does us no good to increase funding to education if kids are sick, abused, or hungry. We cannot expect them to be successful in school and in life under those conditions.

Some seem to think that when we limit the amount of people on the Basic Health Plan or when we cap the number of individuals who can receive health insurance we are saving money. However, that's just not the case. That only forces us to practice emergency medicine, which can be much more expensive than practicing preventative medicine. That means restoring the cuts made to the Basic Health Plan last year and

increasing the amount of low-income families that can receive health care. We cannot climb our way out of recession by leaving some behind.

Finally, we will continue to work on controlling the outrageous cost of prescription drugs. Making prescription drugs more affordable is critical to improving the quality of care. After years of fighting, we scored a major victory for our families and seniors when we passed a prescription drug reform bill. But we need to build on that success and keep working to improve access to affordable health care for all our citizens.

I will be working on ensuring low-cost prescription drugs for our citizens by allowing their purchase from Canada for a fraction of what they would cost here in the United States. There is no reason why Americans should pay more for the same drug than the citizens of any other country. It will be an uphill battle against a very powerful pharmaceutical lobby, but I believe the fleecing of

America's seniors and health care consumers by these hugely profitable companies must end.

### Looking for discounts on prescription drugs?

***A new toll-free phone number may be able to help.***

The Washington State Legislature created the Pharmacy Connections program to help senior citizens and others take advantage of prescription-drug discounts they may be eligible to receive.

The Senior Information and Pharmacy Connections Line is available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. **Call 1-888-435-3377**

Further information about the Pharmacy Connections program and Washington state's prescription-drug reforms can be found at: [www.rx.wa.gov](http://www.rx.wa.gov)

# 2004 Report to the 26th District

## Education – An Investment in our Future



Finding jobs will not matter unless we have a world-class education system for our children. Students in Washington should have the best schools and the best teachers.

The time has come to allow our schools to pass levies with a simple majority. Currently, a school levy can fail even when 59 percent of citizens vote in favor of it. Of all the levies on the ballot in 2002, the ones that failed all received over 50 per-

cent of the vote. That means that a no vote is worth more than a yes vote. That's not right. The paramount duty of our state is to provide the best education we can – but we cannot fulfill that responsibility if our hands are tied by unnecessary and obsolete rules.

Fortunately, the House just passed the constitutional amendment necessary to allow for a simple majority vote; now it's the Senate's turn to debate the issue. I hope they decide to do the right thing.

This year's high school freshmen will be the first class required to pass the state's standards test, the WASL. I do not want to see any children drop out or fail to achieve our standards. However, I do not believe that a single test is always the best method to evaluate a student or a school. Allowing for commonsense changes in the WASL and alternative ways for students to prove they've mastered core subjects will be a crucial part of a seamless system from public school to Higher Education.

Furthermore, I believe that any well-rounded education must include not only core subjects like reading and math, but also subjects that enrich our lives and enhance our society. It is imperative to our democracy and to the physical and emotional well-being of our children that we nurture an appreciation of social issues, personal health, and the arts and humanities.

We contribute to society and to our own well-being by more than just economic means; civic engagement, appreciation of the arts, and healthy living all improve our quality of life. I championed legislation included in

the WASL improvements to assure that students can contribute to and benefit from what makes society worthwhile.

Another hot topic this session will be Charter Schools. These are publicly financed schools that are independent of most state laws and rules. The contract, or charter, details how the school will be organized and managed, what students will be taught and expected to achieve, and how success will be measured. Currently, schools funded by taxpayer dollars are governed by elected school boards, and subject to state laws and rules.

As always, this will be a very contentious issue. Some believe that charter schools will be more responsive to the needs of children, especially those that are educationally disadvantaged. Others believe that this just diverts more money away from our public schools at a time when they can least afford it.



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**For questions  
or comments:**  
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# 2004 Report to the 26th District

## Stopping Domestic Violence

It is hard to imagine any police officer committing a crime, especially one of domestic violence. Likewise, law enforcement agencies find themselves in an unimaginable position, having failed to address domestic abuse when it is one of their own accused of the crime. As is often the case, the evidence was all there, but the policies to end the cycle of violence were not, and that is where we failed Crystal Brame.

Her sudden death opened our eyes, and set into motion a remarkable team made up of city officials, police officers and union representatives, sheriffs, domestic violence advocates, the Attorney General's office, family law attorneys, judges, legislators, psychologists, university professors, prosecutors, and representatives of cities and counties.

On behalf of this team, the legislation that I have introduced will require law

enforcement agencies to adopt policies that meet statewide minimum requirements for training, reporting, inter-agency cooperation, investigation, and collaboration with groups serving victims of domestic violence. Each police department will be responsible for developing their set of policies tailored to their unique community circumstances and in consultation with domestic violence advocates.

## Update on the Burley- Olalla Interchange

The 5-cents-a-gallon gas tax passed by the Legislature last year will fund the new Burley-Olalla overpass, set for construction in 2009. Unfortunately, until this project is completed it will remain a dangerous crossroads.

The Department recently released their study of the intersection's accident rate. While the results show that accidents are down from last year, they are still too high for our standards. Just last month, I was saddened to hear of a 79-year old woman who suffered critical injuries at the intersection.

Until the new overpass is completed, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has created a Citi-

zens Advisory Committee to meet our safety standards, which will begin their Interim Safety Improvement Project this summer. They hope to cut the accident rate in half.

In the meantime, I am supporting a bill along with my Kitsap County colleagues to maximize funding and step up construction in order to beat the 2009 timeline and ensure no more injuries occur or lives lost at Burley-Olalla.



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